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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

February 11, 2005

The Honorable James M. Inhofe, Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, D.C. 20150

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Throughout the history of this Committee, Republicans and Democrats have worked together in a bipartisan fashion to develop, enact and oversee the implementation of important environmental legislation. Developing legislation of this complexity requires a cooperative, open-minded and creative approach to design a bill that incorporates public health, environmental, business and economic perspectives. Next week, the Committee is scheduled to mark-up a multi-pollutant bill that again requires us to find the delicate balance between these often competing perspectives.

Mr. Chairman, last year you successfully shepherded a bipartisan transportation bill through the Committee and the Senate. During deliberations on that bill, you engaged the Ranking Minority Member and Democrats early and saw that it incorporated our concerns. Proof of the effectiveness of this process is the fact that the Senate passed the bill overwhelmingly by a vote of 76-21. We call on you to follow a similar path and work with all of us to develop multi-pollutant legislation that will improve our nation's air quality faster than current law and provide utilities with the certainty they seek to meet our nation's electricity supply needs.

In 2001, the leaders of this committee began developing principles for a multi-pollutant bill that both Republicans and Democrats could support. That effort did not lead to the development of a bipartisan proposal, and this committee has yet to institute a bipartisan process designed to produce a meaningful proposal.

The need for this legislation is clear. If Congress is to pass clean air legislation this year, the Committee will need to produce a bipartisan bill. Failure to do so – and a perceived unwillingness to try – is a mistake and will produce needless gridlock.

Clean air should not be a partisan issue. We hope to avoid a futile markup and instead engage in a dialogue, like the one begun in 2001, to develop a bipartisan compromise that can pass the Senate and be signed into law this year.

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Senator Inhofe on S.131 markup
February 11, 2005

Sincerely,

Jim Jeffords

Max Baucus

J. Mike

Barbara Boxer

Tom Carper

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Frank R. Lautenberg

Sam Dianne